

Musk Thistle Management

By [Brent Meyer](#), Lancaster County Weed Superintendent

Now is a great time to scout your property and treat this pesky weed before it takes over. If you didn't get your musk thistle treated last fall you still have time to get it done this spring. If you had a patch of musk thistle last year, and didn't get them controlled, I guarantee you will have more this year. Because of its aggressive nature, musk thistle is a noxious weed in Nebraska and every landowner is required by State Law to control it on their property.



Musk thistle, classified as a biennial, is already springing up in the rosette stage. Rosettes range in size from quite small (a few inches) to three feet in diameter. They hug the ground and can be difficult to see until they're under foot. The larger rosettes are usually the seedlings that germinated last fall and over-wintered as a rosette. As a biennial, this second year growth will produce flowers and seeds during this season. As the seeds germinate, the process begins again. Musk thistle reproduces only by seed; however a single musk thistle plant can produce thousands of seeds, which can lie dormant in the soil for years. Mature plants that are chopped and left in the field may have enough energy to produce viable

seed, so proper disposal of the seed head is important.

Large infestations of musk thistle may require herbicide control. Musk thistle plants are quite easy to control with herbicides when treated in the rosette stage of growth. Herbicides should be applied in the spring before the flower stalks begin to form and elongate. Repeated applications may be necessary to eliminate the musk thistle infestation. *The UNL Extension [EC-130, Guide for Weed Management](#)*, has products recommended for the control of musk thistle. Always read and follow the label of every product you use, as **the label is the law**.



Contact Information

We need everyone's help, so if you would like more information on thistles or would like to report an infestation contact the [Lancaster County Weed Control](#) Office. Email weeds@lancaster.ne.gov or phone 402-441-7817.